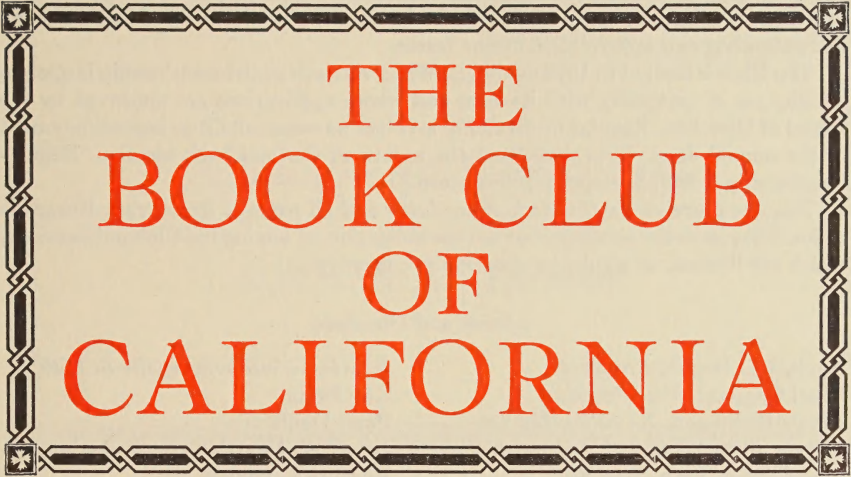


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## Apologia for Collecting

NORMAN H. STROUSE



ELECTED TO MEMBERSHIP      BOOK REVIEW

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## Apologia for Collecting

NORMAN H. STROUSE

When I was extended the gracious invitation to address your assembly this morning, I asked "On what subject?" There was the rather vague response that I should speak on any subject I wished. That, of course, leaves a lot of doors open, but good sense suggested that I should speak about books and collecting, as a major share of my time since retirement has been devoted to the world of books.

Although I made many talks on business during a forty-four-year career in advertising, I have made none since my retirement. Advertising was an absorbing career, but I never looked upon it as a life interest. Books, however, have been a life-long interest, and I began collecting them while quite young. It has been both an absorbing hobby and a source of continuing education.

I've often been asked why people collect books—or collect *anything* for that matter. So most of my talks in recent years have been attempts to answer that question, both in general terms in describing the profile of a collector, and in more specific terms of my own personal motivations and interests in collecting.

It has been observed that if you scratch a collector you'll find under the skin a self-educating man. He may have been exposed to a formal education. He may even have accumu-



lated a scattering of degrees. But the true collector must become a permanent student of his subject, and of his materials.

His main collection cannot be long under way before a reference collection becomes an important adjunct to his main pursuit, and many reference materials must be sought for under the heading of "rarity." Reference books can become a collection in themselves. I have, for example, more than 600 books on the art and history of the book. As one's collecting interests expand and experience strange mutations, one's knowledge of his field, and related fields, broadens proportionately.

The genus collector can often be identified early in life through his interest in match folders, postcards, marbles, coins, or stamps. Some youngsters survive this early collecting virus, and emerge into manhood completely free from its compulsive characteristics. They become upright citizens, completely dedicated to their careers in business, the professions, or in the new horizons of government. But even here we find some residual symptoms of early conditioning. The businessman begins to collect titles, plants, employees, marketing statistics, profits, and dividends. To this may be added many refinements involving the hunger for status (status beyond size and location of office and number of windows)—status, for example, in terms of honorary degrees, chairmanships of public service committees, memberships in clubs, friendships among leaders in unrelated fields such as politics, entertainment, or science—even education and the arts. An old friend of mine, one of the leaders of a great publishing house, had collected degrees from fourteen different colleges and universities by 1958. About the time U Thant, Secretary-General of the United Nations, retired, he received his twenty-eighth honorary degree, this at Colgate University in June of 1971. That's collecting *par excellence*!

The professional man collects patients, clients, authored monographs, or books in his field. The educator tends to collect in some intellectual field, like Dean McHenry, former Chancellor of University of California, Santa Cruz, who col-

lects all the books he can find on the subject of Utopia; but for some educators collecting is a private vice, such as is the case of Donald Clark, librarian emeritus at Santa Cruz, who collects bow-ties, and has some three hundred of them in his dressing room at home. Norman Philbrick, for many years head of the Drama Department at Stanford, has assembled the greatest collection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century English drama materials in this country; but alongside this magnificent collection he has equally significant collections of chess sets and the cast-iron mechanical banks which were quite the rage for children during the early part of this century. If these introductory observations should be interpreted that man is essentially a collecting animal, I will have made my point.

My own collecting habits emerged early in life. I collected marbles for a time, but found that my lack of competitive skill did not warrant the time or investment involved. I began to collect postcards, narrowing quickly into a specialty of pictures of state capitol buildings. The educational aspect of collecting was here involved for the first time, and my grades in geography improved.

Then I graduated to postage stamps, and the world was my apple. Those wonderful little pieces of printed paper that brought famous people, history, geography, and the arts streaming into my ken! I worked evenings for a mail-order stamp dealer, taking out my fifty cents an hour in trade at wholesale prices. In collecting stamps, I was subjected for the first time to that sinister spur of incompleteness—the blank spaces that demanded to be filled, the endless pursuit of the unpossessed. Here, also, I found myself for the first time tempted into what I term spur-track collecting—I went in for pre-cancelled stamps, on which the names of American cities were preprinted. This had an appealing advantage of not requiring financial resources, as around the small capital city of Olympia, Washington, there was many a treasure trove to be plundered, such as the waste paper dump in the old Temple of Justice Building, or in the receiving room of the main depart-



ment store for which I worked on afternoons and Saturdays as a delivery boy.

There were some rewarding by-products to this kind of collecting. I learned the names of all the important cities in the United States. And I became acquainted with the State Librarian and his wife, both ardent stamp collectors. They would invite me to their home in the evenings so that I could look through their collections. We became good friends, and they gave me the run of the State Library stacks, not normally available to the general public.

Education and friendships—these are among the unexpected rewards of collecting. Whereas business or professional life friendships tend to be structured within one's peer group, a collecting interest is a common denominator that brings together people from all walks of life. Some of my most prized friendships have grown out of acquaintance with people completely outside my own professional field, founded on and nurtured by our common interest in collecting books and manuscripts. When I retired from business, I had more genuinely personal friends outside business and industry than in—men and women who proved to be life-long friends.

It has been my observation that this *camaraderie* is one of the special dimensions of human contact that arise out of almost any field of collecting, whether it be stamps, coins, art, antiques, or books. Inevitably small societies organize themselves to bring these collectors together for exchange of information, learned dissertations, social activities, group travel, and so on.

I graduated to books early in my collecting experience, and have stuck to this field in the main, broadening it out to include autograph material and memorabilia. But this has not denied me the pleasure of secondary collecting in a number of other fields. I have collected Wedgwood for many years, my interest having originated in reading Elbert Hubbard's "Little Journey to the Home of Josiah Wedgwood." I collect owls, and have perhaps over 400 of them in every kind of material and representing every kind of owlish personality. A number of them have been done by famous sculptors and artists.

Why owls? Simply because the company I was with for forty years used the owl on the lamp of knowledge as its trademark until 1916, on letterheads, stock certificates, publications, pin boxes, and so on.

To paraphrase Gertrude Stein, a collector is a collector is a collector!

I am no exception in this respect. J. Walter Thompson founded the firm I worked for. He would not qualify as a collector in the strictest sense of the word, but took great interest in yachting, becoming Commodore of the New York Yacht Club. The Thompsons had an only child, Roosevelt Thompson, named for a friend of the family, President Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt Thompson did not enter his father's business. In fact, there is no record that he did anything for a living, other than clip coupons from the securities his father did collect, but couldn't take with him. But Roosevelt Thompson became a first-rate collector, and in a special and somewhat macabre field—the collecting of tombstone epitaphs. He abstained from acquiring the tombstones themselves, however, contenting himself with transcriptions of the texts and photographs. Roosevelt was still alive when I moved to New York, and although I never met the gentleman, I was told by friends that he had thousands upon thousands of epitaphs collected from all over the world, all beautifully organized in cases.

As you may know, many of these epitaphs can be quite amusing, if not hilarious, and there are those who haunt the old graveyards just to enjoy them.

No less gruesome, in my opinion, would be the collecting of death masks, but Laurence Hutton found it a most exciting sport. An editor, author, a bibliophile, and a founding member of the Players Club of New York, Hutton was engaged in the hop business for nine years before his father's convenient death left him financially free to pursue a more literary career without the pressure of making a living. He wrote on a wide variety of subjects, his complete bibliography running to forty-eight titles. He became an avid collector of rare books, autograph letters, and extra-illustrated books. Only by chance



he became a collector of death masks, by accidentally coming across a batch of them which had been thrown out by a widow whose husband had brought together a small collection of these grim objects.

With this fortuitous start, Hutton took to the scent like a baying hound, and his recital of the pursuit of this hobby makes most entertaining reading in three chapters of his book, *Talks In A Library*, published in 1905. The entire collection was given to Princeton University on his death, received at the time, I am told, with something short of enthusiasm. However, it has no doubt proved to be a valuable research resource for those who are interested in the more intimate details of the physiognomy of great men.

Having established the fact that a collector is not an uncommon article, and that collectors can be found in infinitely diverse fields of interest, the next question to be answered is what is at the root of this compulsive habit.

When I spent my last year in New York gradually cataloguing and packing my collection of books and manuscripts for storage, to await the completion of our new home in St. Helena, I ruminated a bit on the question of why did all those six thousand volumes of mine come together. Certainly I could paraphrase Ecclesiastes in saying, "Of collecting books there is no end." There is seldom a library, institutional or private, that does not seem to grow from its own inner dynamics. If there is extra shelf space, it soon fills up. If there is no space left, the shelves overflow and one keeps sweeping books into closets, cabinets, and nooks and crannies with the frenzy of the Sorcerer's Apprentice.

I asked myself as I packed my books weekend after weekend: What lies at the root of this fateful mania for collecting which fastens itself on otherwise sensible individuals? What unseen force slowly transforms the *bibliophile* (the lover of books) into the *bibliomaniac*?

By observation, as well as experience, it is my educated opinion that there are four different instincts, maybe more, in varying combinations and degrees of authority.

First, and most obvious, is the *instinct to possess*. Without



this you do not have a collector. Instead of being content to borrow books from the library, study art objects in a museum, or see stamps and coins on exhibition, the collector must have these things for himself. However modest an array, he must surround himself with them, with a sense of direct involvement in study, or visual or tactile pleasure; or he may wish to lend a special environmental character to his home. In some less respectable instances, particularly found in the field of art collecting today, the collector may wish to create a status symbol. After all, doesn't an original Picasso, Matisse, Renoir, or Kandinsky hanging on the wall suggest without argument that the owner is a man of means, and perhaps is also a connoisseur of art?

The lepers of the collecting community are, of course, those who acquire rare materials with the main object of gain through appreciated values, or a hedge against inflation. Sylvia Porter, the financial columnist, does the book and autograph field a disservice, it seems to me, in her occasional columns pointing out the financial advantages of investments in art, books, and autographs.

There is next the *instinct for proliferation*. The unaware collector comes on some new object he especially treasures, then he finds another related but somewhat different item, but then a third, and a fourth. Suddenly the desire to extend the collection takes hold. Such was my experience with owls, as I mentioned. Now with over 400 of the birds, I still see no limit to the number that I might eventually acquire, although at this point I find myself more discriminating in the sense of artistic quality.

Proliferation may even extend to substantial duplication. The most famous collector of duplicates, in fact, was Henry Clay Folger, whose great Folger Library in Washington is a more permanent monument to his organizing talent and acquisitive instincts than the fortune he accumulated in the early days of Standard Oil. His fetish for Shakespeare resulted in his acquiring 79 out of the some 200 known copies of the Shakespeare First Folio. Second place goes to the British Museum with but 5. The Folger collection also contains 58 copies

of the Second Folio, and 36 of the Third. But these multiple copies have proved to be of priceless value to the Shakespearean scholar, as there are no two copies quite alike, and the study of them enables the scholar to come to a closer understanding of Shakespeare and his times through typographical revisions and marginal glosses.

John Mayfield of Syracuse University collects Swinburne, and had at last count more than 90 copies of the first edition of Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*. Why so many? A number of Swinburne bibliographers have repeated each other's errors in saying that there were only 100 copies of this first edition. Mr. Mayfield didn't believe it, so he wants to bring together a collection of 101 copies to prove them wrong. He has, in fact, already proved the bibliographers wrong, by having identified in other collections about 40 copies other than his own, bringing the known existing copies of *Atalanta* to 130! [Mr. Mayfield was able to acquire copy number 101 for his own collection before his death in 1983.—ED.]

Mr. Mayfield's collection also illustrated another instinct, the *instinct for completeness*. Anyone who collects stamps knows how demanding are the open spaces in an album, and how demanding is the desire to fill them. We all know one or more people who are trying to complete collections of pennies, nickels, dimes, or quarters to include one of every year minted, largely because albums were created with spaces to contain them. You no doubt are aware of a flourishing business first created by the Franklin Mint in offering sets of silver medallions. With your first purchase of a medallion, you get a beautiful silk-lined case with spaces for the remaining medallions in the series, which you purchase as they are issued. The empty spaces are irresistible. They must be filled!

The big-game hunters in the autograph field go after complete sets of the signatures of the signers of the Declaration of Independence, frustrated in most cases by the lack of Button Gwinnett's signature, which now sells for \$40,000 when it but rarely comes on the market. The irony of this lies in the fact that Button Gwinnett was probably the least known signer, and quite possibly the least literate.



Book collecting is no exception to this demand for completeness. The Grolier Club published many years ago a compilation of *One Hundred Books Famous in English Literature*. Almost immediately it became the ambition of a number of collectors to have a copy of each of these books in first edition, and they thereby raised the market prices.

There is a fourth, the *instinct for specialization*. Just as a stamp collector might begin by collecting generally, then progressively narrow his field to collecting British empire stamps, then to British colonial and finally to the colonial period in Canada (yes, I knew a collector who experienced this evolution and became a world authority in Canadian colonials), collectors of books tend to become more and more specialized.

There are specialized collections by author (such as Carlyle or Stevenson), by subject (such as *Panama Canal* or *Camels on the American Desert*), by field (such as *Presidential Letters* or *Recusant Literature*), and by material on which books are printed (such as the collection of Sir Thomas Phillips, the famous vellomaniac of the early nineteenth century, who amassed the greatest collection ever put together by one man, with most of the books and manuscripts on vellum.)

My own habits of collecting have involved all four of the basic instincts I have attempted to describe—possession, proliferation, completeness, and specialization.

In none of these is there any true end in sight. Even in completeness one deals with an abstraction. One reaches toward the ideal objective, but never attains it. One may possess every first edition of Robert Louis Stevenson, but the copy of *Child's Garden of Verses* inscribed by Stevenson to his nurse "Cummy," to whom he dedicated the book, is in the collection of The New York Public Library, never to come on the market. But we are "runner up" at The Silverado Museum, as we have a first edition of *Child's Garden* inscribed by Stevenson to Fanny, his wife.

The Shakespearean collector must live with life-long frustration in the knowledge that the only known copy of the first edition of *Venus And Adonis* (1593) is in the Bodleian Library at Oxford.

The overmastering desire for possession defeats its own aim. If one has a thousand titles in his field, do there not remain two thousand more somewhere beyond the horizon? The related material automatically spreads far beyond the area of central specialization, and infinitely.

With more books than I can read in a lifetime, I continue to buy. I can never know what will be in the next catalogue that I must have. An unexpected phone call from a dealer about some new treasure he will offer me first sends my pulse racing and my bank balance down. Once a San Francisco dealer phoned me that he had acquired one of the Empress of Japan's Buddhist charms, printed and enclosed in a tiny wooden pagoda in 770 A.D., the earliest known copy of any printed piece. The only time I ever saw one was when the Columbia University Library acquired their copy when I was on their Library Council and had the pleasure of approving its purchase.

At the same time the dealer offered me a copy of a Chinese book printed in the eleventh century, four hundred years before the printing of the Gutenberg Bible, which in our Western arrogance we still think of as the first printed book. Technically, of course, it is only claimed that the Gutenberg Bible was the first book printed with movable metal types. But even that is incorrect, as I have in my own collection three books printed in Korea by movable metal types which pre-date the Gutenberg Bible by two to four decades.

So far we have identified the collector as to both his characteristics and varied interests, and have considered his motivations. Next, I would like to describe briefly my own main interests in collecting. Although I have built special collections of authors, such as Thomas Carlyle, Robert Louis Stevenson, Richard LeGallienne, John Ruskin, and John Cowper Powys, and collections in special fields such as the original letters of American Presidents and the history of the Panama Canal, these in time were given to institutional libraries where they could be of greatest use to scholars. The Stevenson collection was retained and the Vailima Foundation was established so that the Stevenson material could be made available



to the public and to scholars through the Silverado Museum in St. Helena. The collection is second only to the Beinecke collection at Yale University, and surpasses it in some areas.

For a period of more than fifty years my main interest has been centered on what I term the Art and History of the Book. Through such a collection I feel that I come to a closer understanding of the basis of all civilization.

The word, as such, is what first differentiated man from animal—his ability to voice sounds that become words, and voice words that became saturated with meaning. With the written word came the first great leap forward into civilization, because it enabled the experience of the past to be carried along securely into the future without the person-to-person contact required in oral communication, with its built-in inefficiencies. One may consider the origin of the oral word and the written word in poetical or mystical terms or in anthropological terms.

In mystical terms, I like to go back to the authority of John of the Gospels, in Chapter I, verse 14, that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." And later he said, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."

From the very outset, there has been a deep mystery about words, and this is perhaps what has surrounded books with a sense of enchantment across the centuries.

The opening words of Genesis are simple enough. "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." But elaborating on the steps taken to accomplish the task, Genesis reports that each step resulted from a spoken command. "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light," was but the first of a series of commands spoken in words. Presumably there was no one around to hear the words, but they seemed to be a prerequisite to action.

By the time of Moses, the Lord apparently became discouraged with the permanent effect of oral communication, and had second thoughts after delivering the commandments by voice to Moses on Mount Sinai, who relayed them in turn to the people. He ordered Moses to return to Sinai: "Come up

to me in the mount, and be there; and I will give thee tablets of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have *written*; that thou mayest teach them."

This has given precedence to the written word, it seems to me, in the spiritual and cultural history of man. It has given irresistible force to the instinct to collect and preserve the written word, whether by individuals such as J. Pierpont Morgan and Henry Folger, or by groups such as the Essenes of "Dead Sea Scrolls" fame, or by institutions such as the fabulous Alexandrian Library, established in the third century B.C., and which at its height contained some 400,000 scrolls.

The written word has also attracted the devoted interest of artists of a wide range of talents in the adornment of books—the beautiful calligraphy, illuminations, and miniature paintings of medieval times, the costly bindings that have contained our books across the centuries, the superb typography and illustrations of our modern presses, even the impressive beauty of fore-edge paintings.

But let us go back to the beginning, and trace quickly the historical emergence of the written word from its early stages of development to the time of the printed word.

The early cave paintings undoubtedly represented an attempt to express thought, or feeling, or primitive spiritual yearnings to satisfy the need to communicate, perhaps with oneself first, and then with others.

The earliest writing was ideographic (symbols standing for ideas), but possessed serious limitations; thus moved to phonetic writing (symbols standing for sounds). The first such writings were on stone, clay, or other solid materials. I have an original Sumerian clay tablet inscribed with cuneiform characters. It dates from the nineteenth century B.C., is over 3800 years old, and records the building of his palace by Kin-Kashid, "The Mighty Governor-King of Uruk."

The Egyptians were the first to use papyrus, a writing surface made from cross-hatched strips of the paper reed found in abundance along the river banks of Egypt. There is no certain date for the first use of papyrus, but it was known in



Athens for use in literary and legal writing as early as the fifth century B.C. This lightweight and durable material permitted the use of the facile reed pen-brush, and represented a major step forward in ease of handling and more efficient storage.

To represent this second landmark development in the written word, I have in my collection a complete Egyptian "Book of the Dead" on papyrus, made up of ten segments of papyrus about eight inches square joined together to make a single artifact eight feet long. The text is a set of prayers constituting a classic version of the "Book of the Dead," prepared for and placed in the tomb of a High Priest in Thebes about 3000 years ago.

Papyrus was used throughout the ancient Mediterranean world for many centuries, and has been found as late as 1022 A.D. in a papal bull, long after parchment had come into general use in Europe.

It has been said, although this may be apocryphal since earlier examples are known, that it was the Egyptian imposition of an embargo on exportation of papyrus to Pergamum in the second century B.C., that created a market of necessity in skins as writing materials. The preparation of these skins was vastly improved, through more skillful processes of splitting, tanning, and bleaching. This product was more durable, and although heavier and more expensive, was exported to the Roman world, known from its place of origin as *pergamens*, eventually "parchment" in English, more commonly referred to today as vellum. The use of parchment accelerated the appearance of the codex, as a book form, or manuscript volume of sheets, replacing the earlier form of roll or scroll.

Parchment also strongly influenced the development of writing. The smooth surface permitted the use of the broad-pointed pen, made of reed or quill. Writing done by such instruments assumed a different appearance from writing done with a reed brush on papyrus—it was more rapid, became more standardized in letter form, and eventually more easily converted to type form.

In my collection are manuscripts on vellum dating back to the twelfth century. The earliest example is an English psalter

of that century, in magnificent calligraphy. My collection of manuscript books on vellum is representative of this form of book art across a period of six centuries. The texts mostly are of a religious nature, including missals, antiphonaries, psalters, and the glory of all manuscripts, the richly illuminated Books of Hours, with their beautiful miniature paintings of the Life of Christ.

The final development in materials for books was the invention of paper. Although, as mentioned earlier, the Chinese developed printing as early as the eighth or ninth century, and printing with movable metal types was being done in Korea by the late fourteenth century, there is no evidence that the secret of such printing was carried in any way to Western Europe. Gutenberg's invention was a complete original development in itself.

But papermaking did originate in China, and moved by traceable steps to Europe. Materials found in a watchtower in the Great Wall of China included nine letters on what proved by examination to be pure rag paper, none dated, however; but the other documents belonged to a period not later than 137 A.D., so the long-established official Chinese date of 105 A.D. remained a reasonable approximation of a date for the invention of paper.

This new material spread west through Chinese Turkestan by 200 A.D., to Kashmir by the sixth century, Samarkand in the eighth, Egypt by the tenth, Morocco by 1100 A.D., into Spain by 1150, following the line of conquest by the Moors, and then into Europe. It was not until 1270 that paper-making was founded in Fabriano, Italy. Paper appeared in Nuremberg, Germany in 1390; but not into England until 1494.

The basic economics of paper-making—unlimited and inexpensive raw material and speed of manufacture—made printing possible, and printing made the use of paper universal. It is another example of the explosive effects of the conjunction of two seemingly unrelated inventions.

Although there was printing of some sort going on in Western Europe prior to 1450, it was either from woodblocks or crudely carved wooden types. The texts printed were of an



ephemeral nature—playing cards, prints of religious scenes with limited descriptive text, papal indulgences, or spelling books.

Regardless of some continuing controversy as to the actual date of the invention of printing with movable types in Western Europe, and by whom it was invented, most scholars are willing to agree that Gutenberg is entitled to the credit for inventing the casting device that made such printing possible; and that the great Bible of 1455 was the first book printed with such movable types, although there remains the nagging suspicion in some scholarly minds that the Constance Missal may well have preceded it.

The period from 1455 to 1500 is called the "Incunabula" period, or cradle period of printing. Books printed during that forty-five-year period are called "Incunabula" or "Incunables." So explosive was the spread of printing, once it got under way, that by 1500 printing presses flourished all over Western Europe and in England, and more than 47,000 separate titles have been identified during that first forty-five years. Mainz, Germany, the birthplace of printing, gained little importance beyond that fact, the center of printing having moved rapidly to Venice, where the great Incunabula printers, Jenson, Aldus, and Ratdolt, held sway. Aldus was easily the most important printer of the Incunabula period, as he was both scholar and editor as well as a superb printer, and brought together a community of Greek emigre scholars from Constantinople, who assisted him in locating the few remaining manuscript copies of the Greek classics, and translating them into Latin for publication by the Aldine Press. Without this timely action, it is likely that many of the Greek classics with which we are so familiar today would have been lost forever.

Another great center for early printing was Nuremberg, Germany, where the remarkable Anton Koberger press held sway. Over 260 known titles were produced by this press, including the fantastic Nuremberg Chronicle of 1493, the first complete history of the world, with more than 1600 woodcuts. Koberger was the first printer to set up a complete book dis-

tribution system throughout Europe, no mean accomplishment in those days of primitive roads and political turbulence.

There is no complete collection of these Incunabula books, of course. Forty-seven thousand titles would be well beyond the means of even the greatest institutional library. There is a census of the copies of Incunabula in the institutional and private collections of America. The fifty-seven titles in my own collection are so registered, and include representation of the major printers and of their major works. Among the highlights are the second, sixth, and ninth German Bibles, printed in 1470, 1477, and 1483 respectively; both the Latin and German editions of the Nuremberg Chronicle, printed by Koberger; the Jenson printings of Pliny's *Natural History*, and the first printed edition of Plutarch's *Lives*; the first printed edition of *Aristophanes* by Aldus; the *Comædiæ* of Terence, printed by Grüninger of Strasburg, in which appear the first printed illustration of stage settings.

Of course, I do not have a copy of the Gutenberg Bible, the *pièce de résistance* of a collection of the history of printing. Forty-two known copies exist. However, I do have a single original leaf from this Bible, which is in itself a rare item indeed today. My leaf opens with Isaiah 63:2, in which the prophet foretells the bloody passion of Israel's future redeemer.

The art of printing came late into England, through William Caxton, whose first book is dated from 1474, a *History of Troy*. Whereas most of the productions of the Continental presses of the fifteenth century were of an ecclesiastical or classical nature, Caxton's books were for the general reader and did much to establish the English language as we know it today. Again, I do not have a complete Caxton book, as any complete volume from this press commands a price of over \$40,000 a copy on the market. But I do have individual leaves from four different Caxton books, the most interesting of which is a leaf from his *Canterbury Tales*.

During the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, the printers approached their occupation with a sense of scholarly devotion to their product as a work of art. The quality of the



paper they used, the appropriateness of type design and typography, the placement of the text on the page, the quality of ink, and the beauty of the impression of type on paper all were a matter of devoted concern to these practitioners of this new form of communication.

During the succeeding centuries, however, the quality of printing steadily deteriorated, and only in isolated instances did printers emerge who continued to look upon the printed book as a work of art as well as literary reservoir of mankind's accumulated knowledge and wisdom, secular, religious, and scientific.

However, great printer-publishers did emerge during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries, to carry on the tradition of fine printing—Bodoni in Italy (Printer to the Kings), Plantin in Antwerp, the Estiennes of France and Switzerland, the Elsevirs of Leyden and Amsterdam, Baskerville of England, Ibarra of Spain, Didot of Paris, and others less known but equally devoted to the art of printing. All of these printers are represented in my collection.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, however, a new and dynamic force appeared in the field of printing—William Morris. He had already made his mark as a member of the Pre-Raphaelite group, harnessing the talents of these remarkable men in the production of tapestries, stained glass windows, wallpaper designs, furniture, printed chintzes, and so on, which found their way into the great homes and churches of England, despite the fact that Morris was a dedicated Socialist. He was also a poet of first rank, and translator of Icelandic and Scandinavian legends. In this latter role, he was disenchanted with the quality of printing of his works, and at age fifty-five set out to change all this, and created a quiet revolution in the art of the book.

The result of his efforts in the few short years of the Kelm-scott Press was a renaissance of fine printing not only in England, but in the United States and Europe as well, as the torch he lighted was grasped by innumerable other printers who believed as he did that great writings deserved to be encased in books of great beauty.

The Doves, Ashendene, Gregynog, Eragny, and Vale Presses of England; Updike, Bruce Rogers, Goudy, and Thomas Bird Mosher in the Eastern United States; the Grabhorn and John Henry Nash presses of the San Francisco Bay Area—these all sprung into full blossom during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries due to the genius of William Morris in capturing the original vitality of the printers of the Incunabula period and translating this into more contemporary terms.

Since the beginning of this century, the San Francisco Bay Area has been particularly celebrated for its tradition of fine printing, and this tradition continues today with a dozen or more fine presses, whose proprietors are more concerned with the essential beauty of their product than exacting the final ounce of commercial profit.

I collect all these presses as a part of my objective of building a representative collection of the Art and History of the Book. And the product of these presses is a source of my continuing education.

I've puzzled a great deal at times about the purpose of fine printing—fine printing above and beyond the call of straight communication. Why should we worry about fine printing at all, so long as the text is legible, comfortable to read, and not unsuited to the subject matter? Is there something in printing beyond this functional object which might qualify it to be termed, at its very best, a fine art?

A page of suitably set type pleases the eye of the expert, no doubt. And the text itself can impart its message efficiently, if not aesthetically, if it were picked up sheet by sheet of simple typesetting. But there is a precious totality in the book that emerges under the hand and mind of the master printer that surpasses the critical inventory of its parts—type, illustration, decorations, paper, presswork, binding, or general format. Were this not so, it would be difficult to understand why so very few great printers have been able to resist the challenge of presenting something of Shakespeare or Dante or the Bible in their personal ways, despite the fact that these literary



masterpieces have already survived literally thousands of previous editions.

A love of great books is to be found in the hearts of all great printers—a love that shines through their works and touches the hearts of those who possess them.

We may well call such beautiful books ceremonial artifacts, but if we do so, it is because they represent that divine spark of creativeness that spreads light across one of the most influential areas of human invention—the printed word.



NORMAN H. STROUSE is former president of the advertising firm of J. Walter Thompson. In December, 1969, he and his late wife Charlotte opened the Silverado Museum, dedicated to Robert Louis Stevenson, in St. Helena, California.

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The following Members have transferred from Regular to Sustaining Membership (\$60):

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The following Member has transferred from Sustaining to Patron Membership (\$125):

Frank A. West	Pebble Beach
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*Book Review*

*Commonplace Book Six*, Sherwood Grover and James D. Hammond. Aptos & Woodside: The Grace Hoper Press, 1983.

If there were a contest between Sherwood Grover's typographical wit and the bits of wit and wisdom he has applied it to in this latest of his commonplace books, the former would win. But there is in fact no contest, for part of Grover's art is his sensitive skill in suiting typography to subject matter, here amusingly demonstrated, but seriously demonstrated in his large body of serious work as well.

In this sixth commonplace book to come from the Grace Hoper Press, James D. Hammond is again a collaborator in the selection and editing, and presumably in the pithy headings above the quotations. Again there are footnotes identifying the types (and indicating the printer's profound knowledge of types), with occasional amusing side-lights. The only concession to changing times, I believe, is the addition



of a quotation from a television interview. Again, as before, Sherwood Grover acknowledges the inspiration of Robert and Jane Grabhorn, who were past masters at this kind of sophisticated typographical fun.

At the beginning of his Printer's Note, Grover suggests that this may be the last of his commonplace books, although midway through he modifies that suggestion. Rather than accusing him of being wishy-washy, one should simply express the hope that he continues to be infected with what Voltaire called (here quoted on page 46) "the itch of bookmaking."

RUTH TEISER

*Editor's Note:* The Club was the grateful recipient of a copy of *Common-Place Book Six*, presented by Sherwood Grover some time ago. Our thanks to Sherwood and apologies for the late appearance of this acknowledgment.

### *Gifts & Acquisitions*

Through the fault of this reviewer, the *Quarterly* missed mentioning another charming privately printed book by Lawrence Clark Powell—a remembrance of Duncan Brent, entitled *Le Monde Passe La Figure de ce Monde Passe*, which is a bitter-sweet tribute to a long-time friend of Larry's, printed for him by Richard Hoffman and bound by Roswell Bookbinding in Phoenix, Arizona. We (I) regret this most unhappy oversight and promise that it will not happen again! Thank you, Larry.

Our thanks to member Alfred W. Newman for two books of uncommon interest for our printing reference collection. The first is *A Century in Print, The Story of Hazell's, 1839-1939* and the second is a continuing history of this long-lived printing and publishing firm in England, *Hazells in Aylesbury, 1867-1967*. The dates may seem confusing, and they are. It appears that Hazells was founded in 1839 and the firm moved to Aylesbury in 1867.

ALBERT SPERISEN

Leah Wollenberg, a past president of The Book Club, has made a gift to the library of a copy of the catalogue for the international exposition of book bindings which was held in Paris this past April to June. Among the fourteen binders from the United States who exhibited in the show, twelve are from California, and five are members of The Book Club of California: Gale Herrick, Jeannie Sack, Joanne Sonnichsen, Marilyn Swanson, and Leah Wollenberg. We are indebted to Mrs. Wollenberg for another fine addition to the collection on bindings.

DUNCAN H. OLMSTED

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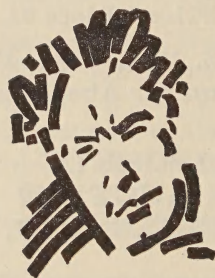
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